INTRODUCTION

The Department of Geography’s strategic plan for the period 2016–2019 builds on the strategic plan for 2012–2015 and comprises five main parts:

1) The department’s strategic areas of focus
2) Research and research training
3) Study programmes and teaching
4) Organization and work environment
5) The department’s culture, professional identity, and dissemination of knowledge

The work on the revision of the strategic plan was done between May and December 2015 and involved all employees (including the members of the departmental board). This document states the direction of the department’s activities in the coming years.

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Head of Department
**The Strategic Areas of Focus Are:**

- Natural hazards and the effects of climate change
- Environment, resources, and management
- Mobility, transnationalism, and inequality
- Innovation and regional changes

**Natural hazards and the effects of climate change**

Climate change may increase the likelihood of natural hazards in many areas, which increases peoples’ vulnerability and ability to cope with such events in different communities. Through working with physical and social geography, we focus on the links between the physical and social world in order to understand what makes individuals and communities vulnerable or resilient, and hence their ability to adapt to changing physical and social conditions. An important tool in this context is the integrated hazard and risk mapping that we perform by combining indices of risk exposure, social vulnerability, and resilience in geographic information systems (GIS). This is also the starting point for research-based visualization to communicate the effects of climate change on communities and what makes them vulnerable or resilient. We also study landscape developments in cold regions, including how such developments are affected by climate change. Our field areas are in Southern Norway and Svalbard, where processes in rivers and the cryosphere change the landscape over different time scales. These processes have created our magnificent mountain and coastal scenery, but they also show the marked effects of climate change, such as glacial recession.

**More Specific Focus Areas:**

- Vulnerability, resilience, and adaptation
- Geomorphology in cold areas
- Visualization of society and landscape change
Environment, resources, and management
Within this focus area, we conduct research on issues related to the use, management, and conservation of various natural resources. There are four main themes:

1. How resources are conceptualized in different ways and in different contexts, such as landscape, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, and how this shapes differing and often contradictory discourses and practices
2. Owners’ roles and participation in decision-making regarding the use and distribution of resources
3. Water, which is both an essential resource but also causes damage through floods and landslides
4. The management of economically valuable natural resources (high-value resources), such as oil and diamonds, in relation to economic development and security in countries in the Global South.

Mobility, transnationalism, and inequality
In this focus area, the general perspective is on how mobility and transnational relations create new conditions or premisses for exclusion, inclusion, and inequality in different geographical and social contexts. A transnational perspective makes it possible to research how processes affect relationships between places and people nationally, locally, and globally. The focus on mobility elucidates how different groups have different starting points, goals, and goal achievements by crossing different borders and boundaries through migration and new forms of communication. Citizenship involves understanding the importance of participation and belonging between groups and in relation to gender, sexuality, life cycle, and ethnicity.

MORE SPECIFIC FOCUS AREAS:
• Landscape, biodiversity, and ecosystem services
• Use and distribution of resources
• Water as a resource and natural hazard
• Management of valuable natural resources

MORE SPECIFIC FOCUS AREAS:
• Globalization, development, and transnationalism
• Migration and mobility
• Citizenship
Innovation and regional changes
The research field deals with regional and local processes of change, reorganization, and innovation. It emphasizes the interplay between changes in moving and settlement patterns and changes in industry. Sustainable reorganization entails, for example, the need to study regions’ ability to diversify their economic activities and reduce vulnerability in communities. We also study entrepreneurship and innovation in businesses, as well as cultural, social, and green entrepreneurship. Important perspectives are how clusters and innovation systems develop, as well as how businesses, places, and regions are connected to global networks and value chains.

Additionally, we focus on urbanity and rurality, and planning and development strategies, including the importance of culture, experience, and tourism for the development of ‘entrepreneurial’ towns and villages. The significance of the local and the regional is emphasized in all themes, and the gender perspective is central in many of the themes.

MORE SPECIFIC FOCUS AREAS:
- Sustainable restructuring
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Urban development, rural development, and perspectives on place

The Department of Geography will utilize the academic potential within many of the links between the four focus areas. This will challenge us to collaborate further, both externally and internally, to create an active research community that will assert itself in the international research community. In addition to setting guidelines for our research, the strategic plan will have an affect on our teaching since this will be research-based.

Goals and measures for research, teaching, organization, and development of the department’s culture, professional identity, and dissemination of knowledge should support the strategic plan and contribute to the realization of our vision of a dynamic department that makes a difference.
Goals
- Combining basic geographical research and research relevant for society
- Develop research collaboration within and between the focus areas
- Increase external funding for research, especially from international funding bodies, including EU-funded research
- Have a well integrated PhD programme and high quality doctoral candidate community in the department

Measures
- Equal time for research and teaching, as a general rule
- Sabbatical for permanent academic staff every 5 years as a rule, with documented research activities
- Build alliances with and participate in selected, internationally recognized research environments
- Actively encourage employees to seek national and international funding sources
- Encourage co-publication
- Continuation of mid-term and final seminars for all PhD candidates
- Continuation of annual follow-up conversations between PhD candidates and the head of the department.
Goals

- Provide a professional and socially attractive learning environment at all levels
- Provide research-based teaching of a high academic and educational quality at all levels
- Provide education (including continuing education courses) relevant to the labour market and that is current in order to highlight and/or contribute to finding solutions to societal problems
- Provide a disciplinary master’s programme as well as master’s programmes targeted at specific segments of the labour market
- Offer varied teaching and assessment methods at all levels to maximize students’ learning outcomes and accommodate varied types of knowledge
- Ensure stable recruitment of well-qualified students
- Maintain the quality of the education and learning environment through good contact between the department and the students
- Maintain and develop the tradition of field courses as an important means of learning in the discipline

Measures

- Test various ways for master’s students to make contact with the labour market
- Draw attention to career paths and opportunities in the labour market
- Facilitate critical debates in studies
- Continue to market geography at secondary schools
- Link master’s dissertations to employees’ research fields and projects
- Invite master’s students to attend research seminars
- Systematically hold meetings between student representatives and the head of the department
- Establish continuing education courses on sub-disciplines and topics in which we have expertise, and test teaching methods and technology for effective coordination between regular education and continuing education courses
- Further develop field courses, especially at first degree level, that is student-centred and activates students by using appropriate geographical information technology
- Choose teaching and assessment methods that provide the best possible learning outcomes
ORGANIZATION AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Goals
- Have highly qualified academic staff in accordance with the priorities listed above under ’Research and research training’ and ’Study programmes and teaching’
- Recruit well-qualified employees for technical and administrative positions
- Ensure that all new employees are well received and have good follow-up
- Develop the Department of Geography as an attractive and including workplace
- Provide competence training for all groups
- Have a conscious policy for older employees
- Create a good physical and social work environment
- Develop a functional division of labour and aim for good communication between the faculty administration and the staff at the department regarding the management of finances and resources
- Aim to ensure good communication between all employees, and a high degree of participation and cooperation

Measures
- Performance appraisals for all employees held once per year as a rule
- Staff seminar once per year
- Use the regular staff meetings effectively and purposefully as an area for information and discussion
- Develop a long-term plan for recruiting new employees
- Make active use of the departmental board
- Develop good routines for receiving and monitoring all new employees, as well as for what may be challenges for some groups (e.g. foreign employees, PhD students)
- Ensure that the workplace is well adapted in physical and ergonomic terms, and encourage joint physical activities and social events
Goals
• Be a leading national and internationally renowned research environment
• Be generous, including, and show interest in each other’s research
• Be a significant supplier of socially relevant research and allow this to also characterize our study programmes
• Be visible in public debates

Measures
• Have professional activity and educational programmes across disciplines
• Arrange at least two departmental seminars with leading researchers each year
• Maintain the internal departmental seminar biweekly and encourage a high level of participation
  • Develop the staff seminars as a creative tool in cultural development and dissemination
• Publish chronicles/features and articles in national newspapers and debate journals
• Continue the use of social media for profiling